

Gainful Employment

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the glory of God, with the hopeful expectation of worthwhile service toward all who read it.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to God for providing me with the direction and the experiences necessary to write this book and for giving me my parents, Gary and Rosemary Suchy, who provided a good upbringing and the opportunity to succeed. Their parenting was crucial to my success. Thanks to Roxane Wergin for her creative genius and James V. Zeik for his focus and direction. Their suggestions ultimately led to my writing of *How to Build Wealth*. That book was just the beginning. Also, special thanks to Corrine Klaphake for all of her enthusiastic support and encouragement, as well as for her insights and perspective.

Lastly, dirt last, even after the former coworker who told me I should take up drinking beer and playing horseshoes instead of writing, I want to thank my dearest and most favorite brother. Concerning my first book, he told me that my time would have been better spent digging a ditch. This time, he told me he is going to send me a steel bucket and he counseled me to burn my money outside, in the winter, so that I can be certain it does not heat my house. I still love him, but his name will not make this book, either.

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Before you begin...

Whether you are reading this book because you are about to graduate, because the economy is poor and you are looking for work, or because you want to take up residence in the corner office, you will find a lot that you can use and much that you have never read before.

This book explains how to make work a rewarding and profitable experience. It explains how to get the job, the promotion, and the respect that you deserve. You will see how work fits into the bigger picture of your life, and how work should enable you to pursue your own goals.

My goal in writing this book was to explain *how to enrich yourself by working for others* in a manner that is so simple to understand and so absolutely practical that you will actually want to apply all of the things that you are about to read.

Keep in mind how you can apply what you read. Small changes in your belief system and little tweaks to your behavior can produce incredible results. Some of the methods are a little out of the conventional realm, and at times you might think the author is a little crazy. Yet, if you apply what you learn, you will impress your boss and surpass your peers, in short order.

So, when you land yourself the corner office or the title of CEO, remember to put this book on your shelf.

Chapter 1

Gainful Employment

I have heard it said that there was a time in the history of the United States of America when it was considered an insult to ask a man who his employer was. It was considered an insult because the question suggested that the man lacked the industry necessary to provide for his own employment. It assumed that he was lazy, incapable, or both. While the question is no longer an insult, the answer certainly could be. So, read the next sentence out loud, and answer to yourself.

Who do I work for?

The answer should be simple. You work for yourself. If you have answered anything else, you need to think again. Your relationship with your employer should be one of buyer and seller. You sell your services to an employer who has need of them and who can afford to buy them. You want to have the best service to offer and to charge as much as you can; your employer wants to buy services that represent value and not to pay too much, for that would reduce the employer's profit.

There is no doubt in my mind that your employer understands the relationship, but do you? When you understand the relationship that you are supposed to have with your employer, you will no longer think that your employer pays you for working. You will realize that you sell services that the employer *wants* to buy. You will no longer expect your employer to increase your pay, for you will learn how to increase your own pay by increasing the quality of your services and by charging a premium.

When you understand the relationship, you will no longer resent or be envious of the financial success of your employer – no, you will encourage it, because you will know how to profit from it. What is good for your employer can be very good for you. When you understand the relationship, you will know how to *enrich* yourself while working for others, because you are really working for yourself.

Understand your Employer

The employer knows that the employee is hired to do something that the employer cannot do for themselves. The employer understands that to produce a marketable good or service, it will be necessary to combine the factors of production, which include land, labor, capital, raw materials, and entrepreneurial ability. Once the factors are combined, the employer can produce a good or service and make a profit.

Some employers may use far less raw materials than others and some may require far more laborers than others, but the point is that employers have needs. One of the most important and *expensive* of those needs is labor. Employers need labor because eventually there will be more work than the entrepreneur can complete, if the business grows.

To have their own needs met, the employer agrees to pay an employee a set amount for the quantity of specific services that are needed. The employer and the employee negotiate and reach an agreement. The employee agrees to provide a certain amount of labor with a certain level of skill in exchange for a certain amount of compensation.

Cheap Labor

Unfortunately, providing something that an employer needs does not mean that you provide a valuable service. You might be too expensive, and that would mean you are not a value. If the employer is losing money by keeping you or you are simply inefficient, you may become a good candidate for being replaced with someone more valuable or something that is less expensive. Later in this book you will see how it is that you can always be valuable, no matter how expensive you are.

Regardless of your role in the organization, you need to contribute to the profitability of the owner or shareholders. That is the only reason they hired you.

Making the Distinction

The right view of employment allows you to pursue what it is that you want. You want the time you spend with an employer to meet your needs, goals, and desires. My father said it best:

“You work to enrich yourself.”

The employer only buys your services because your services meet their needs. You only sell your services because your employer’s compensation – not to be confused with

salary alone – meets *your* needs. By meeting the needs of your employer, you also meet your own needs. It really is all about you, just indirectly.

Why You Go

As an employee, you need to think about how much you gain by selling your time and your services to an employer. Why do you go to work? Well, perhaps you are there for the experience. Maybe you desire the prestige (I hope not, for you cannot eat prestige). You might even enjoy doing what you are doing. You might believe that you are making a difference in society. Maybe working is the only way you know to make money. Perhaps your employment will enable you to achieve other goals outside of work.

All of the above are valid reasons, but some are clearly better than others. Regardless of your reasons, there must be something in it for you, or else you would never go back.

More than Money

When most people think about gainful employment, they think about how large their paycheck will be. Actually, *gainful* employment involves more than money. Money is certainly very important, and I make sure that my employers understand that, but money is not everything. To fully enrich yourself, you need to consider all of your compensation.

Many people make the tragic *mistake* of working only for wages. If you are only working for wages, you are very shortsighted. Why? Wages get paid after you put your time in. If you work 40 hours, you get paid for 40 hours of work. Sure, you have 40 hours of pay, but that is it. You do not get anything *else*. To get more wages, you have to go **BACK** to work. What if you are laid off? What then?

Total Compensation

So, let us look at what could be a part of your total compensation. If you have never considered how much you really could get, read this following section closely.

Suppose I tell you that there is a job out there with an *average* salary and you qualify for it. Do you want it? Well, consider that this employer pays for your health insurance, completely. Not only that, but the job requires only 37.5 hours of work per week and gives compensatory time for any additional hours worked. This job allows employees to work a five day week or a four day week – with longer hours, of course. It provides 20 days of paid time off yearly, starting in your first year. You will also receive ten paid holidays.

The job will increase your skills and position you for better. The job will give you experience that is hard to acquire and greatly in demand. The work environment is pleasant and laid back. You will have a boss that you get along well with. The employer will pay for you to go back to school and for specific training related to your vocation and position.

The office is located less than five minutes from where you live. The proximity to work allows you to come home for lunch, so you do not always have to eat cold or eat out. The gym is located next door. So is the daycare. Also, you can flex your time. Once you prove you are reliable, you will be allowed to work from home. You will have autonomy.

Besides those benefits, the employer provides a match of 100% on your retirement plan contributions up to 8% of your gross salary. The employer also offers stock options, as well as bonuses for both individual and company performance. The company is located in an area where costs of living are low, so money goes further. Parking is free.

You do not have to do anything illegal or unethical. Everyone seems to like you and the company knows that you have a life outside of work. You know the company is financially strong and will continue to grow. There are opportunities for advancement, and you are learning so much that you might be able to go into business for yourself.

Now and Later

To fully enrich yourself, you need to ensure that your job provides you with benefits now, in the near future, and in the distant future (even after you resign or retire).

Immediate benefits can be things such as the wages that you make. You work and get paid, and then you have to go back to work. It does not sound like there is too much more of a short lived benefit than that, does it? Now, consider time off and a pleasant work environment. You benefit now because you get to enjoy the time off and the pleasant environment, but once you take the time off or come home from the pleasant work environment, those benefits are gone.

However, an indirect benefit of the time off and pleasant work environment is that it is good for your health, and that is a pretty good benefit. Also, if you spent some of that time learning more about your finances or if you devoted some of that time off to outside investments, maybe you would not have to work so much, or so hard, or at all.

What is a future benefit? Paid schooling is one. You do not get anything now, but you will increase your value in the future. What about experience? Experience benefits you at your next job but it will also impact your skills, marketability, and opportunities for the remainder of your career. Future benefits can be very beneficial.

Often, people overlook these. I know of many former coworkers who refused to take advantage of company monies for training. Why would you want to go back to school after working all day? Well, while it hurts now because of the inconvenience, the education can position you to receive a promotion or to find a higher paying salary. If you have the opportunity to have someone else pay for your education, by all means avail yourself of it.

I know of a good number of my former coworkers who were happy to let others do work that they did not know how to perform. They were lazy. They did not value experience enough to attempt new things. If they had taken the time to gain the experience, they would have found that they qualified for better opportunities. Sometimes, they were forced out of positions because they refused to grow. The opportunity to gain more experience *is* definitely a job perk.

Even When It Hurts

When I worked for the employer that I call Little Washington, I hated it. I hated just about everything about it. The hours were awful. The travel was painful. The employer was a cheat. They lied to me and stole a portion of my compensation. Yet, I gained the one thing that I needed. I gained experience. I have nothing to say that is good about my time spent working with Little Washington, except that it was the *best* decision that I could have ever made at that time.

Everything was bad, but it gave me the experience I needed. I gained experience working with a technical solution that was in demand. I increased my value greatly and it opened doors to a most rewarding job that would follow. I

spent less than six months at that awful, awful place, but it was worth it. I *enriched* myself by positioning for future rewards.

The most important thing that you can do at your present job is to position yourself for your *next* job – it should go without saying that your next job should *always* be better than your present one. So, whether you are unemployed, gainfully employed, or have never had a job in your life, always try to position yourself for greater. Have you thought about where you are heading? Should you consider changing?

Times Change

When I was starting out, I needed experience more than anything else. At a certain point in time, I quit an employer because I was not being paid enough. At a later date, I was looking for a good paying job, but I valued time above all.

Situations and circumstances change, but if you remember that you are always working to *enrich* yourself in both the near future and the distant future, you will surely have an edge on your competition and you will have far more *gainful* employment than you would otherwise.

Because of the risk that your employment could end, you have to position yourself for better. Even if you love your job, make sure your job will position you to get another one that is even better. You might not need it, but it is good to carry insurance against the unexpected.

Positioning for Success

If you need more time because your interests are outside of work, do not focus on the fact that you might not be able to earn as much money. Time could be more valuable. If you read the book *How to Build Wealth*, you will see how valuable.

When I say time, I am not *only* talking about vacation time. How long is your commute? How many hours do you work each day? Do you receive a paid lunch? How many paid holidays does the company offer? Do you have sick days? Do you have many personal days? Can you flex your time to meet the needs of your lifestyle? It all adds up.

Suppose that you can take a job that is much closer to home, costs nothing to park, and offers a slightly lower wage. Is that worth it? Would you even consider it? Would your ego permit you? How would that impact your life?

In the same way, if you need to make more money then do not stick with some job only because it is easy and you are comfortable. Also, if you need more education to get a better job, you need to start sooner rather than later.

To get what you really want, you might need to get out of your comfort zone. At some point, you might enjoy the same benefits of the comfortable job *and* a higher salary.

The Many Variables

As an employee, you will always be required to trade time for compensation. So, make sure you know how profitable each hour of your work is. If you have to work 60 hours per week to make as much with one employer as you could make working 40 hours elsewhere, then quit and go to the one that requires only 40 hours. Working for free is **NOT** something that you are supposed to accept.

When you consider your compensation, realize that compensation is not just a measure of “what I get.” Compensation should be a measure of “what do I have to give *compared* to what I get.” Consider the hours that you work for

the compensation that you get. If you are working for free for an employer, your hourly rate decreases.

As you can see, something “extra” must really be extra – working and consuming the extra provides no benefit. For example, if you take a job that pays \$10,000 more but it requires you to drive a longer distance, pay for parking, or live somewhere more expensive, you have to consider whether or not you are really making a change that will increase your compensation by \$10,000. Is it even worth it to make a change, all things considered? Evaluate all variables.

Gainful Employment

Remember, *gainful* employment is all about you. It is about what you can get, in comparison with how much you have to give. It is about protecting, preparing, and profiting. I want you to realize that you will surely *enrich yourself by working for others* when you:

Perform *Little* Work Receive *Many* Rewards

While that might sound awful and wrong, realize that you should try to reduce the amount of time and effort that you need to provide to your employer **AND** try to find ways to increase your compensation. Those who know no better will only try to increase their compensation, but you should try to do both. Not only that, but you have to ensure that the reason you get what you want is *because* you provide a value to your employer. *How* to get what you want **AND** be a valuable employee will be covered in the following chapters.

Chapter 2

Getting What You Want

If you want to get what you want you have to know *how* to get it. If you want to be successful, you have to know what employers want, and you have to know how to get them to pay you for giving it to them. This chapter is going to show you the formula to do just that. First, you will see what you need to make an employer want you. Second, you will see how to make your efforts rewarding.

The formula for gainful employment has two parts. Read the parts below and see if you have what it takes to make employment work for you.

Part 1: What Makes You Valuable:

Experience + Education + Personality + Character = **Value**

Part 2: The Key to *Gainful* Employment:

Value + **Selfishness** = *Gainful* Employment

Just the Facts

All employers want to hire employees who understand and follow the first line. Absolutely *none* want to have employees who understand the second. Why? No intelligent employer wants to pay too much.

Nothing is wrong with this understanding – your employer knows why they are in business – but I would not recommend taking this book to work. Unless, of course, you are going to resign and give out copies to all of the overworked and underpaid coworkers you are about to leave behind.

Not a Single Cent More

If an employer can hire a qualified, experienced, honest, reliable, hardworking, and personable employee, why would they pay that employee more than they have to? They won't. The employer is not in business to pay a "fair" wage; they are in business to make a profit from the labor that they buy.

The employer who pays far too much may be loved by their employees, but they would not be called "fair," they would be called "fool." This is because the employer's competitors will pay their own employees as little as possible. The employers who pay less can offer products and services that cost less, and those employers will be more competitive than the "fair" employer. When you sell your services *cheap*, you represent *value* to your employer. You help your employer beat *their* competition.

That brings us to the topic of "worth." Ask most people and they will tell you that they are "worth" more than they are paid. Oh, really? So, what are you worth? You are worth every penny you are paid and not one cent more. You are worth what you are paid right now because your worth as an

employee is what you can get the employer to pay you. If you cannot charge more, you are *not* worth it. If you can charge more, you *are* worth it.

*It is **YOUR** responsibility to ensure that you are paid what you are “worth.”*

It is amazing to me how many people can live their entire lives and never understand this truth. It is amazing to me to see employees who are so ignorant of reality that they actually believe that their boss should *want* to pay them more. Believing that your employer should *want* to pay you more shows a complete lack of understanding. It is backwards.

Your employer should not want to pay you more, your employer should want to find a way to get you to work even *harder* and then pay you **LESS**. Thankfully, employers do not have all the power. Compensation is not set; it is negotiated. Well, unless you give up your power and permit your employer to “set” your compensation. Many employees will do just that. They never negotiate. We will get to that later.

The Burden You Bear

Do you like running water? I sure do. Do you like that the public utility company provides water to you and that you do not need to go find your own source of water? I do. Is it fair to say that your water bill is a good value? I think it is.

Oh, wait, you do not agree? You think that water is too expensive? Ok, but before you say it is not a good value, let me phrase that question another way. Instead of asking what you think, let me ask you if you *would* pay the water bill rather

than having your water shut off. Would you rather pay the water bill or would you choose to have your water shut off?

Now that you have admitted that you would keep paying for water, how much are you willing to pay? Would you pay twice as much? While I do not want to, I know I would. I do not want to go bathe in the river. I do not want to walk or drive to some unclean source of water and fill buckets to take home with me. Somehow, that does not seem like a desirable option, or efficient. What I am saying is that you show that the *value* of the water *exceeds* the price by *continuing* to pay for it. If you did not think running water was a good value, you would stop paying and go without.

Notice that I did not say that you are “happy” to pay the price demanded. I said that you *will* pay because you think it is the best option you have. Your feelings, in this case, do not matter. Your actions matter. If you *will* keep paying for water if the price doubled, then you **DO** think it represents value.

So, why not call the water company and tell them to raise their prices? You are *willing* to pay twice as much, after all. Why don't you simply call the water company and pay them what they are *worth*? Oh, you mean you appreciate that you are getting a *value*? You mean that you like paying what you are paying and do not want to pay more? Oh, really?

You will not even call the water company to tell them that they are worth **100% more**, but you will expect your employer to come to tell you that you are worth a *measly* five, ten, or twenty percent more – the percentage is so small that your employer may not even realize it.

Expecting your employer to give you a raise is as logical as the water company expecting a call asking for a higher water bill. It shows a lack of understanding. It is backwards.

Your employer likes value just as much as you. That is why the burden of appropriate compensation falls squarely on your shoulders. You have the responsibility *and* the power to increase your own compensation. You will see how.

Keep this little gem in the back of your mind: feelings do not matter. If you would pay three times as much for water, because there is value *above* the cost, then what is stopping you from charging your employer a premium to such an extent that they would say that you are not a value but they would keep paying you? Feelings do not matter. Actions matter. If your employer *would* pay you much more than you are making now, there is only one reason: the cost for labor is still a good value to your employer when they consider what they are getting and what you are charging.

The reason for this little section is that I want you to see things as they really are. I want you to understand reality.

An Honest Appraisal

Have you ever worked with someone who was, in your opinion, absolutely useless? They were a terrible employee. They were lazy. They were incompetent. They were paid *more* than you – don't you just hate them? You know who I am talking about. You have probably met someone like this or you undoubtedly know someone who has.

Well, that lazy slob (from now on called "Useless") who comes to work an hour late, pushes his work off on everyone else, and earns *more* than you do – you know what I am going to say next, don't you? Useless is worth *more* than you are, at least in the eyes of the employer.

Now, why did I say that? Because, there are many people who refuse to accept reality and *learn* to succeed. If you

never considered that you are worth what you get, then it might be painful. It is not meant to be. It is meant to be helpful. If you are not getting what you want then you are doing something either wrong or not as well as you could, and there is *always* room for improvement. If you think you are doing what it takes to be successful but you are not successful, then you need to do things differently. If what you are doing does not bring success, the problem is what you are doing.

Worth and Value

Why is Useless worth so much? It is because Useless learned that “worth” and “value” are separate. Truly, Useless is not nearly as valuable to the employer as the hardworking, conscientious, helpful, reliable employee. Yet, Useless knows how the second part of the formula works. Useless realizes that the employer only pays him well because the employer has been made to *believe* that Useless is worth it.

Look again at the formula at the beginning of this chapter. Part 1 of the *Gainful Employment* formula is how to be valuable to an employer. Part 2 is how to increase your worth, and how to get what **YOU** want. Useless knows how to *take* but he is not valuable to the employer. Oh, he will still make more than the valuable employee; he just does not produce.

To achieve the highest of success, you need **BOTH** parts of the formula. You need to be valuable **AND** you need to be worth the higher pay. You might be *valuable* but if you are not paid well then you are just not *worth* a higher compensation.

I will show you how to increase both your value *and* your worth throughout this whole book, but realize that if you are valuable you still need to be able to make your employer pay you more. We will talk about selfishness shortly.

Lacking Nothing

Before we proceed to selfishness, which is a crucial part of the *Gainful Employment* formula, I want to explain why the formula needs both parts to work best. To do so, I will give you a perfect example from relationships, and I will probably give you better relationship advice than most of the “experts.”

I am confident that you have learned that there is a “strange” reality in romantic relationships. The man or the woman who is supportive, caring, loving, giving, loyal, and all the rest sometimes gets discarded like yesterday’s newspaper.

From the other perspective, instead of picking the person who is “good for you,” the person who is “interesting” gets chosen. That “interesting” person may not be loyal, kind, giving, supportive, or honest, but they are what *you* find interesting and attractive. Maybe this does not apply to you; maybe this applies to someone else. Well then, think of someone else. I am sure that you can.

With that knowledge in mind, have you ever heard that “women like jerks” and that “nice guys finish last?” Well, they are true statements, sort of. Some may say that neither is true and others may disagree. Yet, that is the trouble with stereotypes. Stereotypes have been observed enough to appear true, but they are not always true, so they are always false, except when they are true. Is your head spinning?

Anyway, you surely have personally experienced, know someone who has experienced, or will witness or experience the phenomenon described above, so I will explain it. It applies to employment, and it is good advice nonetheless because it is practical and it applies not only to romantic relationships and employment, but also to other areas of life.

Relating to Employment

Ok, here we go. The nice guy is desirable. He is kind, caring, compassionate, giving, loving, reliable, faithful, and understanding. He will never tell his wife or his girlfriend “no” and he would do anything for her. He would make a good father. He is a good person. Her family loves him. Yet, it seems that he has a real problem attracting and keeping a partner – just like the “valuable” employee has a problem attracting a salary increase and anything that even resembles respect.

The jerk, on the other hand, is not reliable, not kind, not caring, not compassionate, not patient, not faithful, not understanding, and never does what his partner wants, yet he has one woman on *each* arm – which makes him even more of a jerk – but he sees nothing wrong with it, and somehow he *seems* to get away with it over and over again. In the same way, Useless *seems* to get everything good but never gives much to the employer. Value is a giver. Useless is a taker. Useless is always after what he can *get*. Simply put, the valuable employee is the embodiment of the first part of the *Gainful Employment* formula, while Useless is the second part.

Distinctions

What makes the jerk more successful than the nice guy in getting what he wants is that he is selfish. The jerk has an edge. He is a challenge. He wants what he wants and does not care what other people want. Drawing a parallel to the first page in this book, he knows who he is working for. He is working for himself. He knows that by believing that he is in demand that he will *actually* be worth a lot. Ironically, it is very simple. You increase your “worth” by raising your “price.” You apply selfishness and demand more from others.

Why does Useless get all of the benefits while producing little? It is because Useless believes that he is worth a lot and he acts like it. He gives the impression that he knows he is worth the pay and that other employers would want what he *appears* to offer. In the same way, the jerk's challenge makes him "appear" valuable because he acts like he is in demand. His significant other *believes* other women would want him, and that he would be hard to replace.

Getting What You Want

People engaged in either romantic or professional relationships want stability, since they are getting what they want. That is what creates the desire to please *the other party*. If you are worried that the other party might not continue to give you what *you* want, you will try to please them so that *they* will continue to please you. You will do what they want so that you can keep getting what **YOU** want.

In a relationship, the jerk's challenge – selfishness – creates attraction. It creates worth. Ironically, the employee who is willing to work elsewhere is able to command a higher wage than the person who is not willing to leave their current employer. Wouldn't you think that the person who is *not* willing to leave should be worth more? Yet, that is not correct.

The "lifer" may be more valuable to the employer because they are loyal and will never leave, but they are not necessarily worth more because there is *perceived certainty* that the "lifer" will stay. Therefore, why should the employer pay the "lifer" more than they have to? It is not like they would leave anyway.

In the same way, why should a jerk work to please their partner when their partner is not going to leave them? There is

no *selfish* reason to, and people make decisions based upon their own selfish self-interests. Thankfully, perceived certainty can be *quickly* changed when a little selfishness appears.

What is important to realize is that the only way to increase your worth is to make the other party, romantic or professional, consider what it is that you can offer and “price” that against what it would take to “replace” you. If the other party *believes* you are expensive or hard to replace, then you are *worth* a lot. If you have said you will never quit an employer or ask for a raise, then you have no leverage and you have basically asked the employer to “take advantage” of you. Do not worry, they will! It is in *their* interest to do so!

In a relationship, the jerk is more successful getting what he wants than the nice guy because his partner is not *sure* if he will still be around tomorrow. His partner is not sure if she can do the things that the jerk wants so that *she* can keep *him*. That is what creates the “worth.” She is pursuing him. Wouldn’t it be nice to have your employer pursue you?

Do not forget that this pursuit can be completely detached from the underlying qualities of the jerk in the same way that Useless gets the promotion while the hardworking dedicated type does not get anything. Sure, the nice guy has the traits “she” is looking for, but the nice guy is just so... eww... The nice guy is not *worth* her time – time, by the way, is an immensely valuable asset that is *spent* on all things.

The “nice guy” can give and give and give and give and he will never use the word “no” or stand up for himself. From the other perspective, the nice guy’s significant other will get everything she wants *except* for an interesting or confident partner. The nice guy will never hold *her* attention. When the nice guy is done giving, and probably even before that, she will

discard him over something trivial and go get herself a jerk that holds her interest. The jerk may not be valuable, and her family might hate him, but the jerk will be *worth* her time.

While we are on that, have you ever seen a good employee fired for something inconsequential and someone who is a terrible employee makes a huge mistake and gets a slap on the wrist? This is why. It is all perception. The nice guy gets dumped for something trivial because he really is not *worth* a second chance – his significant other was looking for a reason to dump him anyway. On the other hand, Useless will not be fired because the big mistake was just not big *enough* – besides, Useless is expensive to replace; give him a break.

As Good as It Gets

While I have just suggested that Useless and the jerk are more successful than their competition, I do not mean to suggest that they are what you should aspire to. Sure, the jerk is more successful dating than the nice guy, but he is not **AS** successful as he could be. Not only that, but the jerk cannot last forever. Eventually, though it could take a long time, the woman that the jerk has mistreated will dump him in the same way that the employer will *eventually* learn that Useless is not producing and fire him.

Both of those sets of choices were bad, but fortunately there is a third class that no one talks about. It is as if society does not know this exists. In relationships, there is the “gentle-man.” (Note to the grammar folks: I added a hyphen on purpose, though I will surely make enough mistakes elsewhere to hold *your* interest.)

The gentleman is a combination of both “gentle” and “man.” The jerk is only the latter while the nice guy is only the

former. The gentleman is kind, caring, compassionate, faithful, reliable, and honest. Also, the gentleman has a backbone, he knows what he wants, he has an edge, he is challenging, he will tell his girlfriend/wife the word “no” when it is appropriate, but he simply does not paint with a broad brush. He can be flexible. He will keep her interested.

The gentleman is valuable because he provides all of the things he should, like honesty and reliability, but he might actually like a different woman better than the one he is currently with, in the same way that an employee who knows both parts of the formula for gainful employment *might* want to go to another employer if their offer is better.

The gentleman is successful because he has the long-term qualities that a partner wants and he has enough of an edge to hold his partner’s interest and make her believe that he is *worth* her time. **HE** is what she wants, but there is still no guarantee that **HE** will want **HER**. So, we have come full circle.

Gainful employment is the same way. The employee who creates value for his or her employer **AND** knows how to say “no,” **AND** knows how to ask convincingly for an increase in compensation, **AND** is going to pursue his or her own selfish interests, is going to be successful in the long-term. That employee will always be able to *enrich* themselves.

That is what I want you to understand. I want you to feel it. I want you to believe it. I want you to be able to provide the underlying value to your employer **AND** I want you to know how to enrich yourself by selling your services for a premium. Only with both parts will you get what you want.

You see, we are not looking for short term success. No, we want to continually enrich ourselves. In the same way that the gentleman is far more successful than the jerk **AND** the

nice guy, so to is the employee who understands how to provide value to his or her employer **AND** how to enrich themselves in the process.

If you are currently an underpaid but highly valuable employee and you start to apply the concepts taught in this book, you will be surprised that you will not only increase your income, but you will probably end up earning even more than Useless – who will be fired eight months from now anyway. You will be the envy of both the lazy, bloodsucking leech *and* those hard working dedicated types who are always underpaid and work too many hours.

Now, on to my favorite topic: me, myself, and selfish I – I really must be a jerk in real life, huh?

In Defense of Selfishness

I know that there are many people who do not need this section. There are many people who are already selfish. You might be the “Useless” that I referenced above. You might be the deadbeat who shows up 30 minutes late and sneaks in through the side door so that the boss does not see you. You might already understand selfishness, albeit misdirected. You are reading this book because you need to learn how to give more so that you can provide a good service and realize a greater return. It is not that you care about others all that much, but you know that you will have to give something to get the other party interested, so that you can rob them blind.

If the above is the case, most of the rest of the book will be designed to address your “special” needs. However, there actually are honest, kind, and considerate people out there – you know this to be true because you have taken advantage of most of them at some point or other as they crossed your path.

So, if you believe that all of your work is performed “as unto the Lord,” as most Christian religions teach, or if you are not religious and just simply believe in providing the very best of your efforts to the employer, then you might be more likely to be underpaid, unfortunately. This is because you might not see how selfishness is not only necessary, but completely ethical and wise. Also, if you have never learned how to master your fear of charging a premium, you are *surely* underpaid. Mastering your fear will be covered later.

Selfishness, a Moral Requirement

Selfishness, as I am using the term, is not a bad thing. Selfishness means that you act in your own self-interest. You are working for you. You want to get the most for yourself. The simple person would say this is bad, but there is more to it.

If you are not selfish, what are you doing to prepare for your future? If you are not selfish, who is going to represent you? Who is going to represent your children? Who is going to prepare for your retirement? Who is going to provide good things for your spouse? Why do you want to pay your debts off *slower*? Why do you want to work **LONGER** and have **LESS** time to spend with your family and friends? Why do you want to miss enjoyment in your life? Why do you want to be cheated? Do you think your *refusal* to do the right thing will be rewarded or appreciated? It will not be. Ask your family what they think of your long work hours – you will see what I mean.

Does the employer know why he or she employs you? Yes, they do. The employer knows that you are employed to advance the employer’s interests. The employer hires you to make money, or support those who do, so that the employer can have more freedom, more time with *their* family, more

resources to do the things that they want, and more resources to support the causes that they support.

For those of you who see working for less to be moral, let me clarify. Working for less than you deserve is definitely **NOT** moral. Do you strive to give *less* to charity? Yes, I mean that. Do you want to make *less* money at your job so that you can give *less* to charities that you support? Does your church need *less* money or more? Would you like to have *fewer* resources with which to prepare a future for your children?

But wait, you say you are loyal to your boss, right? That is why you give them so much unpaid overtime. Well, I guess that means you are not loyal to *your* children, *your* spouse, *your* family, *your* friends, *your* interests, and *yourself*. By working for free, or for less than you deserve, you are saying that your boss is more important than everyone and everything else. If you are loyal to the boss who wants you to be underpaid, because it is in their interest, then you cannot *enrich* yourself. If you cannot enrich yourself, then you have less to *give* to everyone else. Who *deserves* your loyalty?

Working for less is not defensible. When you refuse to be selfish, you are not wise. What does the Bible say?

Ecclesiastes 5:19: "Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labor; **THIS IS THE GIFT OF GOD.**"

1 Timothy 5:18, "...The laborer is *worthy* of his reward."

Does that make sense to you? Your reward is what you work for. A pleasant environment, good pay, and whatever else you

want. Do you want a smaller reward or a larger one? Your reward is not the actual work; it is what you *get* from it. How do you get it? You negotiate for it. You act selfishly.

Still not sure what you want? Well, I am going to tell you. You only come to work because there is something in it for you. You have no desire to work for free. You will not work for less than you are worth. You will not be mistreated. You will ask for a raise. You will quit if you find a better place to work. You are going to *enrich* yourself whether your employer likes it or not. You are going to charge what the market will bear. If your employer wants services, they are going to **PAY**.

Clear Direction

From reading this chapter, you should have realized that you need to provide a good service to your employer and you need to get as much as you can. If you do not act in your own selfish interests, then you will not *enrich* yourself. If you do not provide a good service, then you will eventually be fired. Not only that, but you will limit your potential enrichment. When you produce quality goods or profitable services for your employer, you enable your employer to reward you more liberally.

In the next chapter, you will read about how you charge a premium for your services. After that, you will read about what increases your value, so that you can charge even more. As you can see, the pieces to the enrichment puzzle are beginning to come together.

Chapter 3

What the Market Will Bear

Think back to the question of whether your water bill is a value or not, from the previous chapter, and recall that whether or not your employer *admits* that you are a good value does **NOT** matter. What matters is if the employer *continues* to pay you what you negotiate for. You negotiate, from a position of strength, for as much as you can get. As much as you can get is what the market will bear.

If you want to get what the market will bear, you need to start somewhere. It all starts with asking for a raise, or ensuring that you are hired for the highest compensation that you can negotiate for. If you are a timid person who will not ask for what the market will bear, as many people are, then you are more likely to be underpaid. I will venture to say that if you do not ask for the salary that you are worth and a raise when it is deserved, you are *guaranteed* to be underpaid in the short and long-term. Also, while getting as much as you can when you start a job is somewhat intuitive, to most, let me point out that if you never ask for a raise, you will *never* reach the highest degree of personal profitability. So, do not let me mince words.

YOU HAVE TO ASK FOR A RAISE

I have worked in retail, I have working in manufacturing, I have worked with professionals, and I have worked with the semiskilled. I know one thing is certain: I *always* made more than my peers because I always asked *convincingly* for a raise. I positioned myself to ask and then I asked. I received. This chapter will show you how.

The Problem with Emotion

The refusal to ask for a raise is *completely* emotional. It is not logical. The logical and reasonable action is to go ahead and ask for a raise. If you know you are worth more money, you are supposed to ask for it. That is logical.

The reason you will not ask for a raise, when you deserve one, is because you are *afraid*. You are afraid that your diabolically evil, fire breathing employer will tell you “no,” before devouring you whole! Oh, the horror! Fortunately, fear is only an emotion, and it has many emotional enemies – greed is only one of them.

So, how do you beat emotion? You beat emotion with a more *powerful* emotion. You cannot beat emotion with reason. Logic, thinking, wisdom, forget it. Bah! None of that matters. The grandest array of reason will fall powerless at the feet of emotion – sadly. I wish it were not so, but it is.

I can tell you all of the reasons why you want to ask for a raise, but if you are afraid of asking, you will never ask, because you are afraid of it. (How is that for circular logic?)

To beat emotion, you need to find leverage. That leverage is often in something else. If you have a need to make more money because your child needs braces, you will have the emotional leverage. If you hate that you cannot “keep up with the Joneses,” then you will ask for a raise. If you want expensive and stylish clothes, you will ask. If you always wanted to take a certain vacation or take advantage of an opportunity but you just do not make enough money, then you will be able to override your fear and ask for an increase. Also, of course, if you just plain and simply want to have more money to spend, save, give, or invest, you will ask for a raise.

Suppose you are afraid of spiders. You prefer to run and scream rather than dispatch them. Now, suppose your young child is sleeping and you see one descending from the ceiling right above *your* child. Will you let the spider bite the child? Think you will be able to muster enough courage to overcome your fear of spiders for just a moment? I think so. The spider’s movement toward the sleeping child provided the leverage. Once emotion was on your side, reason was *allowed* to act.

Mastering Your Emotions

What does it all boil down to? Feelings. You force yourself to act when you *imagine* how you would feel if you did or did not do something. For those of you who are afraid to ask for what you are worth, you are afraid because you imagine that the process will be painful. Well, it is. I will not lie. **BUT**, it only hurts for a moment. It is over before you know it. You worry and your heart pounds, your hands sweat, and

your mind races, but then you ask and it is over. Release at last. If you ask convincingly, by preparing your employer to accept, then you will probably receive what you ask.

So, the way to beat the fear of asking for an increase is to imagine *vividly* what it would *feel* like if you **DO NOT** ask. *Imagine* not having the money to send your son or daughter to the school you want them to go to. Imagine the feeling of not being able to afford the vacation you want. Imagine being stuck with that same old automobile, or in the house that you hate. Imagine *vividly* how you would *feel* with the extra money. Imagine the *feeling* of how confident and successful you would be when you ask and your boss says “yes.” Dwell on the feeling of success and on the fear of what might happen if you **DO NOT** ask. That will force you to ask.

Still, I know some readers will *refuse* to ask. You are **NEVER** going to be successful if you *refuse* to do what creates success. Your actions produce results. If your actions produce results that you do not want, then you need to change your actions. If you refuse to ask for a raise, expect to be paid less than you could be. It does not matter how much you make. If you do not ask, you will always be paid less in the long run.

A Worthwhile Employee

If your employer tells you that you have asked for entirely too much money, but they choose to pay you what you ask, then that means your employer thinks you are the very *best* employee that they can find and you are too valuable to lose. Let me put it this way: you do not have to be liked to enrich yourself. Though appreciation is good and should be a goal, I would rather be paid well than appreciated and

understood. You cannot eat appreciation; neither can you retire on it. Employers understand this. So should you.

Risk and Continuity

Your employer will pay you more when they think that by losing you they will have to pay more to get a replacement. Yet, even if they can pay the replacement your current wage, the costs, risk, and aggravation associated with finding someone new may be enough to earn you an increase. Use that knowledge to increase your compensation.

Even if an employer can replace you with someone exactly the same, their operations will be disrupted and they will have costs related to training someone to replace you. By the way, who is going to perform all of your duties in the interim? Will the work just magically get done? Oh, and who says your replacement will not be a thief?

Paid to Produce

One afternoon, at work, I stopped by the water fountain to fill up my mug. As I did so, I saw the newest employee. After a little discussion, he asked me how easy it was to get a raise from my current employer. We got to talking and he told me that he was doing a good job and he was going to want to ask for a raise when it came time for a review. I stopped him and explained something that bears repeating.

You are not going to get a raise because you do a good job.

*You are **PAID** to do a good job.*

What qualifies you for an increase is to take on *more* responsibility. You need to expand what it is that you can *offer* your employer. To do that, look around. Most employers

cannot tell you what new duties you can take on as well as you can find them and assume them on your own.

As you work, look at what jobs have to be contracted out. Look at what it is that other departments have to take care of. Look for what needs to be accomplished but never is. Look for areas that are cluttered. Look for broken equipment. Gain more job related education. Search for new ways to create solutions to current problems that everyone else assumes are here to stay. Seek ways to streamline your employer's operations. Figure out how to make *more* money for your employer. Look at the goods and services that your employer produces and consider if you can decrease their costs.

Remember, do **NOT** say "I do a good job. I deserve a raise." **NO**, doing a good job is what you are *already* paid to do. If you need to have a raise to do a good job, maybe your employer should fire you and get someone who will do a good job for what you are already paid. Furthermore, if you do *not* get a raise, does that mean you will stop doing a good job? Do not make the mistake of falling into that trap. Sometimes it ends badly, but even when it does not, you will make yourself look like a fool in front of your employer.

Performance Evaluations

Increased production and higher value is what qualifies you to ask for more money. That is what I mean when I say you have to "prepare to ask convincingly." You prepare for the raise by selling a better service, or more of it, in the same amount of time. If you have a better service that you can offer, then your employer will have to pay more.

One way to show this is through the employee performance evaluation, but sometimes the evaluation will

come without an increase in compensation. Be aware of that. At one company I worked for, I had two raises and then I had my first and only review.

Regardless, always do well on the performance evaluation. Why? A performance evaluation can protect you. If your boss decides they do not like you, how can they fire you for failure to perform if your performance evaluation is wonderful? They cannot. A good review can help protect your claim to unemployment compensation, if you are terminated.

Measuring Up

If you have ever had a review, you might recognize the one through five rating method. This method of reviews divides the primary job requirements and rates the employee on a scale of one through five. The ratings are typically what you see below, but sometimes the words differ.

- 5 – Employee Fully *Exceeds* Job Requirements
- 4 – Employee Partially Exceeds Job Requirements
- 3 – Employee Fully *Meets* Job Requirements
- 2 – Employee Partially Meets Job Requirements
- 1 – Employee Does Not Meet Job Requirements

While it might seem that a “perfect” score is a five, a “perfect” score is actually a three, not a five. If you get a three, you fully meet all of the job requirements and no one should be able to say anything bad about you. You did *all* you were asked.

Many coworkers I have worked with over the years have criticized this review method and have been angry that they cannot get a five. The common statement is “it is not fair because the company will not let me get a five.” No, a five

means you have so over exceeded your position that you do not even belong in it anymore. A five means you need a new position with more duties and higher compensation.

The truth is that the vast majority of employees do *not* qualify for a five. Even those who do qualify for a five should only qualify until they receive their promotion. Then, they should be back at the three or three/four level. Most employees qualify to average a three because they are fully meeting all of the requirements of their job. Make sure you see things clearly.

When the Time is Right

When it comes to taking on more duties, you normally should **NOT** ask your employer for a raise for each and every little thing. You are best served to save up your increased duties and present them all at once. Employers do not like being asked for wage increases anymore than you enjoy a street corner beggar who asks you for money.

Employers have to go through the emotion too. The employer has to think “Will they really leave?” “Will they get their coworkers upset and stir up strife?” “Will they start underperforming?” There are many things that the employer has to consider when you ask for a raise. As such, if you often trouble an employer for a raise, you will not be looked on favorably even if you are increasingly providing value for the employer. The “I want a raise” experience is not pleasant for your boss. Also, no one that I know of likes a nag.

The Measuring Stick

It should go without saying that your increased duties have to compare to and exceed your job description. If your job description shows that your increased duties are already what you are expected to perform, then you cannot argue for a raise

based on that. Furthermore, if you are doing tasks you are not responsible for, but failing to produce when it comes down to what is already required of you, you can just forget about a raise. First, do what you are required. Then, take on more.

You need to know what your job description states. You need to know your benchmark. Also, you need to be forward enough to demand that you are evaluated on tasks that you actually perform. Many of my past coworkers were evaluated on tasks that had nothing to do with their job. Because they were too timid to demand an evaluation based upon the *real* requirements of their job, they always received lower scores than they deserved. **NEVER** expect Human Resources to know what your job entails – unless it is in some unionized environment with very specific job descriptions.

In the case of a unionized workplace, you are subject to collective bargaining anyway. Your union will negotiate the compensation for your position. If you do something unique in a union environment, you would want to talk to your union representative about how or if the company would be able to compensate you for duties outside of your current job.

Your job description provides the benchmark. It shows you what the present expectations of your services are. Do not be shy. If your job description states you are supposed to drink coffee and play solitaire and you work like a mule on steroids, then you are probably in line for an excellent wage increase. Once, I significantly outgrew one of my jobs. As such, I asked for a 45% wage increase because I was able to demonstrate that I so greatly outgrew my position. I got the increase.

Market Compensation

So, how do you do it? You take on more responsibility. Once you have done that, you ask for a raise, convincingly. Oh, wait, I said ask “convincingly.” To ask convincingly, you need to know what you are worth. It is not hard to figure out.

You go look in the newspaper and in online advertisements. Look for positions that are somewhat similar to the work you are now performing and find out what other employers are paying for those services. Normally, you can inquire what the salary range is if there is a contact. Sometimes the compensation is listed. Remember to ask for what the benefits are. Then, save the advertisements and take them with you when you ask for a raise – you do not have to carry them with you, though it may be a good idea, but make sure you have a copy so you can show the employer if they ask for proof. Reference the fact that you got the idea of what you are worth from looking at what other positions pay.

Getting a Raise

The process for getting a raise is fairly straightforward. Perform well the job that you are *already* paid to do. Expand your duties and responsibilities and look for ways to offer more and better services to the employer. Compare your expanded duties to what it is that you are paid to produce. Search for other job offers that are similar to your expanded duties. Explain to your employer that your responsibilities increased and that your current wage is not competitive for what you produce. Ask for a raise that is competitive for your new found responsibilities.

There are a couple of other things I would like to mention. When you ask for a raise, you need to stress that you

are asking for a raise because you **KNOW** that your duties have increased. Furthermore, explain that you know that **OTHER** employers are paying a lot more for the services that you now perform. By doing so, you will show that you are willing to go somewhere else to be paid what you are worth.

I would never threaten my employer by saying that I would go somewhere else if I did not already have a job offer in hand, and even then, I would just resign. Do not tell your employer that you are looking for another job. The employer may assume that you are going to stop providing quality work because you do not expect to stay around for very long. That could get you fired.

Maneuvering

There are things employers do to prevent or delay you from getting a raise. Some employers will stall and tell you they will talk to you later. Others say that increases only happen at a certain time of the year. Sometimes, you need to go through the various bureaucratic channels. You should be accommodating, but if you are being put off, *force* the issue. Do not demand to talk when you can see your boss is in the middle of something, but lost time is lost money, so do not be delayed for a long time.

I had one employer whose HR department kept telling me that they were going to ask for a raise for me. One month later the HR department still did nothing. As my patience had run out, I asked the owner directly and eventually received the raise I was looking for. HR was insulted, but they were no friend of mine anyway, so it meant nothing.

Do not overstep your boss when asking for a raise. Your immediate supervisor may not be the one who authorizes the

increase, but you need to at least inform them of your intent. However, sometimes you will have a soft spoken supervisor or one who is not in your corner. In such cases, you are forced to go to the person who makes the decisions. You are not helped by dealing with people who cannot or will not explain why you should be paid more.

Another tactic that I preemptively prepare for is the “we are going to give you a bonus” line. Personally, I do *not* want a bonus. I want a raise – well, unless I am going to quit in a short while. The problem with a bonus is you do not get paid more and then next year you would have to ask for twice as much just to get a normal raise the second year. I make it clear that I am **NOT** looking for a bonus and that I want a wage increase.

Also, if you change jobs, your next employer will probably determine their own assumption of what salary you will accept based partly upon what you currently earn. So, it may not pay to take the bonus. I understand the time value of money, but there is more to accepting a bonus, instead of a wage increase, than just the real value of the money.

More than Money

Remember how I said that there is a lot more to compensation than money? There is. I have asked for things other than wage increases. I have asked for paid training. I have asked for additional paid time off. I have asked for my employer to pay or reimburse me for health insurance. I did not always succeed, but often I did.

You can be flexible with your employer. Sometimes you simply cannot get the full increase you desire as wages, sometimes you need to get creative and find other beneficial

ways to enrich yourself. In my case, I *love* additional time off, in addition to a higher wage.

Though I personally consider paid training to be a viable compensation increase, I do not consider it to be dollar for dollar. Training helps me better perform for my current employer. It is not going to enrich me unless I quit and go to work for a higher wage somewhere else. What good does training do for me if I am already underpaid and by virtue of paid training I become even more highly skilled so that I can provide a better service and be even more underpaid than I was before I received the training? That is stupid! I want more money! I do not want to be *more* underpaid. Do not be fooled.

A Different Approach

While requests for additional compensation are often done in person, you do not have to ask in person. In my opinion, you should **NOT** ask in person. Why? Well, the person who makes the decisions for your compensation may be very busy and hard to get to. You might also catch them in a bad mood. Also, you have to deal with nervousness. So, if you know that the decision maker does a lot of business through e-mail, send them an e-mail and explain the reasons why you need a wage increase. At the end of the e-mail, ask to talk about it with them, in person, at their convenience.

I have used this method very effectively on numerous occasions. It works wonders. Why does it work? It works because neither of you have to go through the emotion of seeing the other person when the request is made. You can also normally explain something better in writing than you can when you are nervous and have to express it verbally. Finally, the decision maker can read about why you are worth it and

think it over, even before talking to you. They can also check with your boss or coworkers to find if you are being truthful about the increased duties you have assumed. This is an incredibly effective method for asking for increases. If you think it is appropriate for your situation, by all means use it as much as you can.

Increasing Your Own Wages

When you are desirable, because you have everything an employer is looking for (the first line of the *gainful employment* formula), you seek to enrich yourself by selling your labor for as much as you can get (the second line). The company is not going to give you what you are worth; no, you need to *force* them to pay you what you are worth.

On the other hand, your employer might just realize that you are underpaid and that you should be paid more – as soon as you ask for a raise, that is. I asked one employer for a raise and they plainly told me “I am surprised you did not ask earlier.” How is that for negotiation? Notice, however, that they did not come to me to tell me I should be paid more. No, they waited for me to ask. They knew all along that I deserved it, but they did not come to tell me that I was underpaid! It would have cost them. Since they unwisely admitted that I should have been paid more months ago, I asked them to make my raise retroactive to the start of the quarter. They agreed.

Become the person that everyone wants to hire and then ensure that your employer *knows* that everyone else wants to hire you. That will guarantee that you can charge every penny that the market will bear. In the next chapter, we will begin to explore what it is that you have to offer your employer.

Chapter 4

What You Have to Offer

It does not matter how good of a salesperson you are, you still need to have something to sell. You can understand that enriching yourself involves what you can get and you can understand that you need to be assertive. You can even know how to position employers to compete for your labor. None of that matters if you do not provide value to your employer. You need something to sell. That “something” is what you can provide for your employer.

You become valuable when you have the components of value, as were listed in the first line of the formula for *gainful* employment. You need experience, education, personality, and character. You need to have these because when you do, you have something that you can offer.

A Difference of Opinions

Before I wrote this book, I mentioned the components of value in a discussion I was having with one of my coworkers. After listing the four components mentioned above, my coworker ridiculed me for my assertion that not *everyone*

knew them. She said: “anyone beyond the age of sixteen already knows this. Do not waste people’s time.” Hmm...

Most ironically, the woman who told me that I would be wasting my time explaining what makes a person both employable and desirable was herself held back because she refused to pursue a degree. She was doing the work of a person in Information Technology but she had neither the title nor the compensation. Nevertheless, I thanked her for her opinion. What was there for me to gain by arguing?

Since this book is in your hands, I obviously was not convinced. I have lived and worked long enough to see people who were held back because they did not have a degree. I have seen people who had such a cantankerous personality that no one wanted to hire them and those that did hire them wanted to fire them. I witnessed a middle manager, my boss, lose her job for not having enough experience to perform. I worked with people who lost jobs because of petty theft – one of my coworkers at Big Box was fired for stealing a \$10 gift card, for example. Even worse, he earned \$10 per hour. I have worked with several people who were denied raises because they were perpetually late and did not put much effort into their work. I have known and do know people who cannot find the job they want because they never gained enough experience, and the right kind of experience, at previous jobs.

That is not all; there is more. I have worked with several professional men and women who were in upper management but were fired for having affairs with coworkers – one of which occurred in the Chairman’s office, during the workday – so character is not important, right? Also, I have met many people who could not understand why they had so many interviews and no one wanted to hire them. Could it have been that they

did not have the experience, education, personality, and character that an employer was looking for? No, could never be that... Oh, lest I forget, there are many people who I never met because I never called them for an interview. They lacked education and experience and had no professional etiquette.

So, while my former coworker would disagree, this subject is very important because a superficial understanding of what it is that you need will simply *not* suffice. You need to know the details and how things relate to each other. As you read the following four chapters, do so from the perspective that what you read will refresh your awareness. If you internalize what makes you desirable, you will never be held back from your goals by things that you have control over. There are so many things that you cannot control – the economy, your boss, and your coworkers, to name a few, but doesn't it make sense to control what you can?

You *can* control your experience, education, personality, and character; you simply have to choose to. You can also evaluate those components to discover if any one of them has held you back. You can plan for the future by improving upon your traits so you will be able to achieve the next level in your career. It does not matter whether you have never had a job or whether you are at the “top” of your career. I have seen all kinds of people fail, for they refuse to do what works.

Also, if you are someone who, due to industry or business cycles, is somewhat more at risk of being laid off than most, this is a very important topic for you. You will need to know how to position yourself to be marketable.

Knowledge in Action

If “everyone” knows that you need the components of value, why then do so many people fail? I guess they “know it” but never realized that there were consequences to disregarding it – like my former coworker, the know-it-all secretary, who provided quality work for which she was not compensated, due to her lack of formal education.

Knowing is not enough, you must *apply* your knowledge. If you do not know then you cannot apply. If you know but lack the emotion behind it then you will realize that there is a best solution, but you will refuse to act because you lack emotion. Emotion is what makes you act when the immediate result is uncomfortable or painful. What do you feel when you think of taking a night class after you have worked all day? What could make you override that emotion?

Interdependency

As you have seen from this brief chapter, lacking in even one area can ruin great opportunities and prevent you from having a chance to explore them. If you are educated, experienced, and have the right personality, but choose to steal from your employer, you will never succeed. In the same way, if you are honest, experienced, personable, and have all the other qualities that your employer wants, but you are limited by education, you will never have the opportunity to succeed.

So, evaluate what you have to offer your current employer *and* your future employer so that you can determine what you have and what you need more of. Ask yourself what it is that you think will make you qualified for whatever position you seek and compare that to your current qualifications. Act upon your findings.